

Proposal  
Console-ing Passions Conference

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Expository Strategies in Experimental Video Essays by Women

In the past decade women video artists have been instrumental in defining a distinct genre of experimental video art. While there is not yet a commonly accepted term for this work, critics and makers have used concepts such as “experimental video essay” or “editorial art video” to describe works which present an organized argument or the exposition of an issue. Such works use rhetorical organization to present an audio-visual essay on matters of social and political importance, including but not limited to feminism.

Differing from the tradition of social documentary in visual and rhetorical organization, this body of work tends to be undervalued by the video artworld which often finds it insufficiently exploratory in visual form and suspect because it centers on addressing the social world rather than the personal vision of the creative artist. This work has also been ignored by various literary culture intellectuals who bemoan the loss of “public intellectuals” in contemporary times. My analysis will argue that in fact this work demonstrates a new medium of expression for “public intellectual” concerns and evidences a broadening of the role of innovative art after a long period of Cold War formalism.

I will consider work by Martha Rosler, Sherry Millner, Laura Kipnis, Vanalyn Green, Aiyoka Chenzira, Joan Braderman, and others to (1) define the genre, (2) discuss how it is informed by feminism even when the topics addressed are not explicitly feminist in scope (e.g., Rosler’s work on “disinformation”), (3) address the organizing strategies and audio-visual rhetoric of the makers and elaborate on different strategies within the genre. Several short clips will be used for illustration and comparison and contrast.